

# SOCIALIST APPEAL

An Organ of Revolutionary Socialism

Vol. II. — No. 3

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1936

Price 10 Cents

## FROM OUR VIEWPOINT

### OLD GUARD DETERMINED TO SPLIT PARTY ON NATIONAL SCALE

THE refusal of the old guard to accept the compromise decision of the National Executive Committee promises to bring to a head the struggle between the old guard and the Militants and to solve the problem of that struggle once and for all. With an intransigence worthy of a better cause the old guard refuses to give in one inch and openly proceeds to prepare a national split in the Socialist party. "We have just begun to fight," screams the *New Leader*. Very well! The left wing must be prepared to finish it.

It should now be clear even to the meekest and most fearful of the party members that the old guard is determined to have its way or split and attempt to ruin the party. To those who would make a fetish of democracy and unity it should be evident that the old guard wants neither democracy nor unity. It wants to rule the party in its own way and nothing less. The decisive manner in which it rejected the compromise of the N.E.C. proves that beyond question.

That compromise is not one which can be approved by a revolutionary Socialist. The only possible reason why the N.E.C. was justified in arriving at such a compromise was the certainty that the New York old guard leadership would reject it. Otherwise it would have been a dangerous thing to do as it would have left the situation just where it was without having settled anything at all.

The difference between the left wing and the old guard comes to the surface with reference to their attitude on the N.E.C. decision. The left wing disapproves of it but as a disciplined group accepts it; the old guard scornfully rejects it. The question as to which group is more loyal to the party has been answered conclusively.

It has been plain to many for quite some time that conditions in the Socialist party in New York were driving towards a split. The old guard composed of men who tenaciously clung to a theory of socialism which brought nothing but disaster to the working class of Europe saw younger elements appearing on the scene, elements who were unwilling to swallow the kind of socialism taught by Oneal, Lee and Waldman. Most of these younger elements came into the party at a time when the depression was destroying the entire base for the reformist movement. In addition to the effect of the crisis in capitalist economy the victory of fascism in Germany shook the very foundation of social democracy. The result was the rise of an opposition to the old guard, an opposition which challenged the theories and the policies of those who were openly declaring that the German Social Democracy was one hundred percent correct in all its miserable policies which led inevitably to the destruction of the working class movement.

A peculiar combination of all anti-old guard elements in the Socialist party destroyed the hold which the New York stand-patters had on the national organization. This occurred at the Detroit convention of the party. In spite of the fact that the anti-old guard combination had elements which were in complete theoretical agreement with the New York social democrats, a declaration of principles was adopted at that convention which represented the first hesitating step away from the worship of bourgeois democracy as a cure-all for the ills of society.

It was a grim and ominous portent for the old guard. The hand-writing on the wall was clearly visible. A fight to the finish was determined upon. The New York leadership organized a bitter struggle against the declaration of principles characterizing that rather innocent document as "communistic." That struggle failed. The old guard then proceeded to carry on a guerrilla warfare both against the anti-old guard majority on the National Executive Committee and more especially against the Militants of New York.

The publication of the Socialist Call by the Militants and the success of that venture showed that the opposition forces had real strength. There arose the possibility that the old guard would lose organizational control in New York just as it had lost it nationally. Under these circumstances the great believers in democracy began to crush democracy in the party. Under the threat of a national split in the party a majority of the N.E.C. actually entered into a "peace pact" with the old guard, an agreement which the Militants correctly rejected because they were not a party to the agreement and because it gave the old guard practically everything it wanted.

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But no agreement could bring peace into the party. The old guard refused to grant the minority freedom to advocate its views and used the "peace pact" as a justification for its arbitrary acts. Enraged at the failure of the NEC, at its meeting in October, to forbid the Thomas-Browder debate arranged by the Socialist Call the old guard determined to clean out the Militants and passed a motion to reorganize Local New York.

That of course meant that the old guard was determined to get rid of the Militants through splitting the party. The left wing dared not refuse to accept the challenge. The refusal by the old guard to reconsider the motion for reorganizing the Local was accepted by the Militants as an indication of the determination of the old guard to split the party and the Militants thereupon walked out and proceeded to organize the Socialist party of New York free from the crushing domination of the old guard.

What else could they have done? Waited for the axe of the old guard to descend upon their heads? Capitulate to the old guard? It would have amounted to a betrayal of the socialist movement. Unity is an idea which appeals to all of us but there are times when principles are above unity and in order ultimately to achieve real unity of the revolutionary proletariat it is essential to split. In this case the Militants however can justifiably claim that the split was precipitated by the old guard and that they acted in the defense of the Socialist party. And the failure of the old guard up to the present to get any favorable response from the general membership outside of New York is proof positive that the membership considers the old guard as the splitters.

The action of the Militants in holding an emergency conference at Utica and in transforming the conference into an emergency convention shows a highly realistic attitude to the whole situation. The Militants proceeded on the correct supposition that NO COMPROMISE WAS POSSIBLE OR DESIRABLE. A new set up in New York was essential. A party without the old guard had to be and was created.

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The New York Militants had all the right in the world to expect that the new state committee elected at the Utica convention would be given recognition by the N.E.C. The action of the old guard in attempting to expel the Militants was a slap in the face of the N.E.C. and those about to be expelled represented the living forces of the party. The interest of the party as well as the interests of the Militant faction cried aloud for decisive action by the N.E.C. But the majority of the N.E.C. in order to placate two members of the N.E.C. compromised on the basis simply of suspending instead of revoking the New York charter and of ordering a new registration and election instead of recognizing the new state committee. We repeat: that decision had only one possible justification—the certainty that the old guard would reject it.

With the rejection of the compromise by the old guard the situation remains practically as if the state committee, elected at Utica, had been recognized. In rejecting the compromise the old guard and their followers have read themselves out of the



party in New York. The old guard is calling an eastern conference in preparation for a national split. The N.E.C. is obliged to take drastic action against those who attend that conference. The N.E.C. is obligated to do everything in its power to isolate all the old guard followers BEFORE THE PARTY CONVENTION. The convention should be made not a splitting convention but a convention where vital problems facing the socialist movement especially during a presidential campaign should be discussed and solved.

A group has a right to appeal to a convention of the party for a final decision on any grievance it may have but on condition that it abides by the decision of the N.E.C. up to the time of the convention. By openly proclaiming its defiance of the N.E.C. and its readiness to split the party the old guard has forfeited that right.

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The old guard boasts of the fact that it has a majority of the New York membership behind it. Figures are produced to prove that the "bolters" consist of a small minority of the membership. This is shown by indicating what the dues paying membership is and the number of those who voted for the Militants. Assuming the correctness of the figures published in the *New Leader* it is obvious that the old guard at the very best is left with a dues-paying membership, in the foreign federations. All the active members have left and joined the Militant New York Local. A decisive majority of the up-state locals were represented at the Utica conference. No revolutionary Socialist should for a moment begrudge the old guard its "majority" of dues-paying members. The question of majority and minority is not at all decisive in this case. It is fundamentally a question as to which group has the members who will make a living, functioning organization out of the party. And no one need doubt that all the life and activity is concentrated in the Militant group.

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Let us assume that because of the refusal of the old guard to accept the N.E.C. decision there will be to all intents and purposes a new Socialist party in New York. It may be premature to discuss such a problem but due to the fact that the Appeal cannot come out as frequently as intended a few general remarks are not out of place. To a revolutionary Socialist the character of the new party is an exceedingly important question.

We are here faced with the glaring fact that at the Utica convention no theoretical problems were raised and no resolutions were passed to indicate what the new party would stand for. The obviously conscious attempt to refrain from raising theoretical questions can perhaps be justified by the claim that it would be incorrect tactically to raise any questions which might possibly have brought division at such a crucial moment. Nevertheless we must draw the necessary conclusion from that very fact. And the conclusion is that the Utica convention was composed of a heterogeneous group representing the crassest reformism and all shades of left socialism, with the dominant majority of a distinct centrist character.

From this general characterization of the composition of the Utica convention it follows: NO MATTER WHAT THE OUTCOME MAY BE THE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISTS DARE NOT ASSUME THAT THE STRUGGLE IS OVER. THE STRUGGLE WILL NOT BE OVER UNTIL THE PARTY AS A WHOLE WILL FOLLOW THE PATH OF REVOLUTIONARY MARXISM. THIS MEANS THE NECESSITY OF CONTINUING AND STRENGTHENING THE ORGANIZATION OF THE LEFT WING.

### A UNITED DEFENSE ORGANIZATION

SO LONG as members of the Socialist party did not participate actively in the various struggles of the workers there were very few party members or sympathizers arrested; so long as there were infrequent arrests the need for a defense organization was not felt amongst party members. Before the question of a Socialist defense organization could be raised it was necessary that Socialists and sympathizers feel the lash of the master's whip. No sooner did members of the party become active in the class struggle than some of them experienced the "hospitality" of capitalist jails and the question of creating an organization to defend those caught in the net of capitalist justice came upon the order of the day.

The arrest of Hapgood and two other Socialist party members in Terre Haute while helping striking workers against the terror of martial law created a very dramatic issue and a great opportunity for our party to build a defense organization. The opportunity was taken advantage of to some extent but it was far from having been exploited to the fullest extent possible. That this is so is evident from the fact that at the present moment all that we have is a name, a secretary and an address. These things are not to be sneered at. They are important but they are not sufficient.

What was the reason why practically no organizational results followed from such an important case as the Terre Haute case? Fundamentally because the case was actually given over to reactionary labor leaders of Indiana. No real attempt was made to organize the Labor and Socialist Defense as an independent organization which would handle the Terre Haute cases. So much effort was made not to antagonize the labor leaders that the result was that the labor leaders used the Socialist and Labor Defense when they were in need of it and afterward simply threw it overboard.

In Terre Haute there is not a remnant of the Labor and Socialist Defense. Who can deny that? The fact that proves it beyond any possibility of contradiction is that HUGO RASMUSSEN, A MEMBER OF THE PARTY AND THE LEADER OF THE INDIANA WORKERS' ALLIANCE, WAS IN JAIL SIXTEEN DAYS IN TERRE HAUTE WITHOUT ANY PUBLICITY ON THE CASE AND WITH PRACTICALLY NOTHING DONE ABOUT IT. It is the fault of no one in particular. It is due to the fact that no independent organization existed which would immediately take the responsibility of handling the matter and as a result another case which could have been used to build up the defense organization was muffed.

Let the comrades learn a valuable lesson; when there is a case to be defended the party members with close sympathizers must organize their own forces and ask the labor movement to help. Do not permit the big labor leaders to assume control. The organization will be killed if you do.

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At the present moment however the task is not only for the Socialist party to build its own defense organization but also to take the initiative in creating a united defense body for the purpose of defending all victims of capitalist class justice regardless of religion, color or political beliefs. This can best be done on the basis of existing defense organizations.

There are at present four defense organizations: the International Labor Defense which is controlled by the Communist party; the General Defense controlled by the Industrial Workers of the World; the Non Partisan Labor Defense under the domination of the Workers' party and the Labor and Socialist Defense controlled by the Socialist party. The above organizations have the support of various labor unions. In addition we have numerous united front committees taking care of individual cases. The duplication is tremendous. Money and effort are wasted. Unity is demanded by the situation. Julius Hochman, one of the leaders of the International Ladies Garment Workers, at a recent meeting held in New York for Angelo Herndon, boldly raised the question of one defense body. His proposal found a favorable response in many quarters.

There is only one realistic approach to the problem of creating a unified defense organization. It must be on the basis of a combination of a membership organization with united front controlling committees. At the present stage a membership organization, with control by the membership of all leading committees, will mean the use of the organization as a political football and its inevitable break-up. Simply an organization with united front committees without any membership branches will mean an ineffective organization as far as mobilizing the masses is concerned. A combination of the two is the only solution at the present time.

In practice this will mean that leading committees be established in important centers composed of representatives, in equal number, of all four defense organizations with prominent labor leaders to serve on the national and local committees. The members constituting the organization will be willing to follow

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# The Case Against Sanctions and "Neutrality Legislation"

By Harold Draper

IT HAS been claimed that a common characteristic of both reformism and communism is a disbelief in the ability of the proletariat to achieve its own emancipation. The Communists try to replace the working class with themselves, the reformists try to substitute other class groups for it. Whether this little theory is true or not, the present position of the Communists and reformists on the war question is such as would be expected to flow from it.

For both are trying to fight war thru the same means: using the working class to put pressure on their imperialist governments, with the intention of making anti-war instruments of these governments; rather than using the working class to combat the imperialist policies of their governments.

Now, for the working class to try to influence the foreign policy of the government is perfectly legitimate in itself; and so is the policy of trying to utilize the contradictions between the imperialist powers in favor of the workers. These aims, which the Communists claim as their justification, are not our point of attack.

But it is one thing to influence the foreign policy of the government, and it is another thing to **subordinate working-class action** to that policy. It is one thing to utilize imperialist contradictions, and another thing to give up the revolutionary class struggle in order to do so. It is the latter course that communism-reformism is taking when they come out in favor of League of Nations sanctions against Italy.

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The revolutionary workers, in their desire to end the war, aid Ethiopia in its fight for national independence, and strike a blow at fascist Italy, have certain means at their disposal: boycott of Italian goods; refusal by the workers to handle shipments to Italy; direct aid to Ethiopia (financial, medical, etc.); mass protests. Like all other anti-war actions, these means will be effective in proportion to the strength and class-consciousness of organized labor. This is what constitutes **independent working-class action** against imperialism in the Italo-Ethiopian conflict.

The imposition of sanctions by the governments is urged as another road to these ends. The theory runs as follows: if all the nations present a united front against Italy's aggression (even if they do so only because of their own imperialist aims), the result of their collective action will be to force Italy to give up the war, since she obviously is not ready to fight the whole world. Thus peace will have been restored, and Italy's designs defeated. Thus English imperialism will have been played against Italian imperialism in order to strike a blow against world imperialism. Pleasant illusions, certainly!

We must recognize at the outset that if one's aim is to achieve a temporary peace at any price, there is one very easy way to do so: give Ethiopia to Italy. No imperialist power is going to make war if its lusts are satisfied. But it is not difficult to see that this **imperialist solution** of the question solves nothing at all. It can only strengthen and encourage, not only Italian imperialism but all imperialisms, to undertake similar operations, and thus it leads all the more surely and swiftly to war. It is claimed that sanctions will restore peace without this drawback. Let us see whether this is true.

In the first place, there is undoubtedly a danger that sanctions, far from ending the present unpleasantness, will rather lead to war on a larger scale. This is almost certainly true if Italy refuses to give in to League of Nations pressure, for the following considerations:

1. The League sanctions system provides for a gradation from economic and financial sanctions up to military sanctions, as one step after another fails to bring results. Military sanctions is a polite term for the making of war against Italy by the members of the League of Nations. Such a war will be fought under the slogan of "Punish the aggressor," and probably even "Crush fascism," but we do not here have to discuss why it will have as bad a stink as that other war which was fought to punish Germany's aggression on Belgium and to save democracy. And it is natural that economic sanctions should lead to war; for economic sanctions means economic war, and all imperialist

wars are nothing but the inevitable continuation (by other means) of economic wars.

2. The initial form of economic sanctions is a government embargo on shipments to Italy, and a government ban on Italian imports. The Communists in addition advocate a step which they refuse to call military sanctions: i.e. the closing of the Suez Canal and a blockade of Italy. It is obvious that, if Italy refuses to knuckle under (and Mussolini says he won't), this leads immediately into a naval conflict—war. For the Suez Canal can be closed only by navy big guns; it cannot be closed by turning a key in the locks, since it is not a lock canal. And if the C.P. has first advocated closing the canal, how can it fail to support the war to which this step leads? To do otherwise would be to tell the British government: "We told you to sock that fellow in the nose, but we didn't tell you to get into a fight with him."

3. The Soviet Union's delegate at Geneva, Potemkin, made a very interesting proposal to the League, undoubtedly with the best intentions in the world of helping the cause of peace. He proposed that the League apply sanctions not only to Italy, but also to the nations that refuse to apply sanctions to Italy (e. g. Austria, Hungary, Albania). He did not say whether he recommended applying sanctions to the nations that refuse to apply sanctions to the nations that refuse to apply sanctions to Italy. Whatever its motives, such a step would be a most efficient way of speeding the process whereby the world is lining up into armed camps.

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But here the C. P.-reformist camp will say: "Look here, you assume in all this that Italy will persist in the face of League sanctions. But sanctions will not lead to war for the simple reason that Italy must and will yield to collective action by the governments of the world." Let us therefore consider case II—where Italy does give in. What would this mean concretely?

Even before Italy started military operations, it is well known that the League (including England) was willing to offer her a deal whereby she would get effective control over Ethiopia. Mussolini insisted on making war—perhaps for internal reasons—although all correspondents reported that the proposed deal would leave Ethiopia nothing but the legal semblance of national independence. Several times since, with Laval as intermediary, feelers have been extended to Mussolini repeating such an offer. The New York Times for November 3, in its weekly news summary, reports in a most casual, parenthetical fashion: "Private negotiations among Britain, France and Italy, looking toward peace—and toward the inevitable partition of Ethiopia—were pressed with renewed vigor...."

This then is what "effective" sanctions mean: that Italy accepts what she rejected before—a deal whereby the loot is "fairly" divided, England's interests are preserved, Italy gets its cut so that Mussolini can maintain his prestige at home, and Ethiopia is taken into the "protective custody" of the League of Nations in the same way as anti-fascists are taken into the protective custody of the Italian police. It means that a temporary peace is restored in the easy way mentioned above—by giving Ethiopia to the imperialists, but in a diplomatic (civilized) way, not a military (crude) way. And around such a deal the entire League of Nations will be united, from England to Italy (with the exception, we trust, of the Soviet Union) and then—it will be plain enough that the **only** source of aid to Ethiopia against Italy is independent working-class action.

But there will be this difference: at the present time, independent labor action operates while the imperialists themselves are at loggerheads, disunited, unable to put up a common front against working-class action. When sanctions are "successfully" applied—after an imperialist deal—**independent labor action** operates in the face of a reunited imperialist front, all arrayed in support of the subjection of Ethiopia. The sanctions will have smoothed over (temporarily of course) the contradiction between Italian and English imperialism.—What an ironic situation! The Communists justify sanctions as a means of utilizing imperialist contradictions, when as a matter of fact it is through independent working class action **only** that one does so.

Another point: after an imperialist deal is patched up among



Britain, France and Italy, and the burden of defending Ethiopia is clearly shifted back to the workers alone, will these be in the same position to carry through this task as they are now? Clearly not; for as long as the government is applying sanctions there is no need for agitating for independent action. As long as there is a government embargo on shipments to Italy, the workers will see no point in getting themselves stirred up about their own action. In short, sanctions will lead the working class to rely on government action rather than on their own, they will dull the edge of the workers' weapons, so that when the time comes when the governmental crutch is removed, they will not be ready to walk alone. This only describes the usual effect of all kinds of class collaboration.

And so the significance of sanctions can be shortly summed up as follows: at worst, an imperialist war; at best, an imperialist peace.

The Communists have another argument left—an illuminating argument. Driven to admit that England and the League will consummate an imperialist deal as described, they will say: Yes, but when such a deal is arranged, and the governments seek to

withdraw the sanctions, the working class must insist that the government continue the sanctions, it must fight for "real sanctions." But after the British government's conflict with Italy is ironed out, it no longer has any reasons for applying sanctions against Italy; and if it yields to working-class pressure, as the C.P. envisages, its reasons become those of the workers, which are to defeat Italian imperialism and fight fascism. In other words, the C.P. is proposing that we seek through working-class pressure to make the imperialist government of Great Britain into an instrument to fight Italy consciously for the sake of defeating imperialism-fascism-capitalism, when none of its own interests are at stake! The logical next step is to propose to mass-pressure the government into abolishing capitalism at home! This is literally to the right of Bernsteinian revisionism, but perfectly in line with Ercoli's report at the 7th Congress of the Comintern which called for democratic workers' control of... the general staff of the army! Workers' control of the capitalist state!

(Section of article dealing with neutrality will be published in next issue).

## TO PAY DUES IS NOT ENOUGH

THE LEFT wing of the Socialist party has seen the necessity of formulating a theoretical program based on the principles of revolutionary Marxism. Conferences have been held and a more or less thorough discussion conducted on the theoretical problems confronting our movement. The questions of the road to power, of war, fascism etc. have been analyzed and some conclusion arrived at. This is as it should be. But to be satisfied with the attempt to solve theoretical problems and not to attempt to deal with questions pertaining to organization and the functioning of the party would leave the party, in the long run, in a position which is not much better than at the present.

As a matter of fact the left wing has realized the necessity of a disciplined party. The word 'discipline' is quite frequently heard at all left wing conferences. The revolutionary Socialists, more than any one else, have felt keenly about the organizational slovenliness and inadequacy of our whole party structure. In spite of that no serious discussion has been carried on dealing with organizational problems and with the question of the functioning of our party. Certainly no one has proposed any definite plans looking to a change in the structure and functioning of the party.

In this article I shall confine myself simply to the question of the minimum requirements which the party should make upon every member in order to permit that member to claim and exercise the privileges of membership. This question of course involves the whole problem of discipline and cannot be solved completely except in so far as the general problem is solved. Nevertheless a start must be made somewhere and it seems to me that we might as well start with the elementary problem of who should be considered a member of the party.

The constitution of the party makes eligible for party membership all who subscribe to the principles of the party. There is one provision for the suspension of a member—failure to pay dues for three months. The above two provisions indicate more clearly than anything else the reformist nature of our party. And in practice the situation is even worse than the constitution would indicate. For the fact of the matter is that rarely is any member suspended for failure to pay dues for a period much longer than provided for in the constitution. A party member in arrears for six months, a year or even longer simply pays up his dues and is immediately given all the privileges of a member.

In truth our party at best is simply a dues paying membership and at the worst a membership that pays dues only when some vote is to be taken. It is notorious that before the declaration of principles was voted on the old guard persuaded scores of members who had practically dropped out of the party to pay as much as two years back dues and vote against the declaration. We shall even admit that the same might have been done by those who favored the declaration, which does not make the practice any more justifiable. At any rate this is a recognized practice in our party and is entirely "constitutional."

Another prevalent custom is for more affluent members to pay a year's dues in advance and never show their faces at any

branch meeting. There is a branch in Chicago which boasts of eighty dues-paying members. And the average attendance at branch meetings is no more than fifteen. An efficient and persuasive secretary sees to it that the members are paid up. This also is perfectly "constitutional."

It seems obvious that a tightening up of our organization is necessary in order to have a functioning party. A party that permits an "absentee" membership will never amount to anything in the class struggle. A revolutionary party must be composed of an active and not simply of a dues paying membership. And at the present stage of the development of our party it is not at all too much to ask that a member attend branch meetings at least once a month and to provide that a member who fails to attend four regular branch meetings in succession should be suspended and failure to attend six regular branch meetings should mean dropping from the rolls of the party. And it is also necessary to provide that failure to pay dues for five months in succession should mean that a member can no longer be considered a member of the party. And upon being reinstated to the party, either by paying up dues or by coming to meetings, a member should not be permitted to exercise the privileges of membership for two months.

Here one will be confronted with the objection that this is a mechanical approach; that simply to lay down rules compelling attendance or payment of dues will not bring about the desired results and will cause a terrific drop in membership.

That, in a very general way, there is merit to this contention cannot be denied. I indicated above that payment of dues and attendance at branch meetings are only two aspects of the general problem of discipline and the problem cannot be solved simply by laying down all kinds of rules. Revolutionary socialist discipline is different in kind from communist discipline. The latter is a blind discipline of the barracks and of the Catholic church. What we should strive for is a discipline which is a result of education and understanding and that kind of discipline cannot be obtained merely by the promulgation of rules and regulations. It is a result of the conditions enumerated by Lenin in his Left Communism. That paragraph is worth quoting in full.

"And, first of all, the question arises—Upon what rests the discipline of the revolutionary party of the proletariat? How is it controlled? How is it strengthened? Firstly by the class-consciousness of the proletarian vanguard and by its devotion to the Revolution, by its steadiness, spirit of self sacrifice and heroism. Secondly by its ability to mix with the toiling masses, to become intimate and, to a certain extent, if you will, to fuse itself with the proletarian masses primarily, but also with the non-proletarian toilers. Thirdly by the soundness of the political leadership, carried on by this vanguard, and by its correct political strategy and tactics, based on the idea that the workers by their own experience must convince themselves of the soundness of this political leadership, strategy and tactics. Without all these conditions, discipline in a revolutionary party, really



By Rudolph C. Olson



capable of being a party of the advanced class whose object is to overthrow the bourgeoisie and transform society, is impossible of realization. Without these conditions all attempts to create discipline result in empty phrases, in mere contortions. On the other hand these conditions will not arise suddenly. They are created through long effort and bitter experience. Their creation is facilitated by correct revolutionary theory, which, in its turn, is not dogmatic, but which forms itself in its finality only through close connection with the practice of the real mass and truly revolutionary movement."

Nothing need be added to what Lenin said on discipline to show that it cannot be achieved in a mechanical manner. And yet that did not prevent Lenin from insisting, in the early stages of the development of the Social-Democratic party, that every one who wants to be a member of the party must join a branch of the party. While the Mensheviks contended that it was sufficient, in order to be considered a member, for one to accept the principles of the party and pay dues.

Even if we were unable to enforce strictly a constitutional provision making obligatory more regular attendance at branch meetings it is necessary that such a provision be in the constitution if for nothing else than simply as an ideal for which we would strive. And there is no reason why such a provision cannot be enforced.

And to prevent the practice of paying up back dues or of coming to a meeting just before a vote is to be taken on an important issue it is also necessary to provide that if a member is automatically suspended for failure to pay dues or to attend meetings he cannot exercise the privilege of membership for at

least two months after he pays up his dues or begins attending meetings.

To the objection that there are some party members active in party work and because of that are unable to attend meetings the answer is that provision should be made to excuse such members. Although the custom of paid employees of the party to neglect branch meetings must be discouraged. There should be no one so important as to make his attendance at branch meetings unnecessary.

It also stands to reason that a branch should be given authority to excuse any member from attendance for some urgent reason.

To the objection that it would reduce our membership in the party the answer is that better, a thousand times better, to have a small party with active members than fool ourselves and everybody else with a large membership of nominal members. If necessary we can create some organization for those people who cannot attend meetings and cannot or do not want to be active. They will do much more good that way than by belonging to the party.

But it does not at all follow that demanding a minimum standard for membership in the party means a reduction in the number of members. It might be so temporarily but not in the long run. To cut out the dead wood from the party means to place the party on a basis where it can grow in numbers and influence.

The principle must be recognized that MEMBERSHIP IN THE PARTY OBLIGATES ONE TO WORK AND SACRIFICE FOR SOCIALISM.

## MISTAKES AT COLUMBUS

By Georg Mann

NOTE: The Appeal is not necessarily in agreement with the views contained in signed articles. The editorial board of the Appeal favors the freest discussion of all problems facing the revolutionary movement and consequently we invite contributions representing all points of view. We append this note to comrade Mann's article because it raises so many interesting and controversial questions with reference to the activities of the Yipsels in the student movement. But the principle enunciated in this note is applicable to all signed articles.

**I**N ORDER for Marxist theory to serve as more than a screen behind which opportunistic leaders may hide the reactionary character of their actions, it is necessary that Marxism be directly and consistently applied to all the relationships between revolutionists and the organizations in which they participate. This axiom is particularly important at the present time when the Young People's Socialist League is beginning to emerge from beneath the accumulated debris of reformist years and is taking the first feeble steps along the road that will eventually make it a genuinely revolutionary youth organization. It is absolutely necessary that we examine all our actions in order that we may discover the exact causes of failure or success; it is especially important that we analyse our conduct in order that we may discover the source of every opportunistic deviation from a correct Marxist line.

With few exceptions, the conduct of the YPSL at the Columbus convention of the American Student Union displayed an unholy reverence for the tested principles of opportunism. The majority of student Yipsels behaved as though the only concern of the league was to avoid offending anybody—anybody, that is, except that minority which betrayed an unfortunate leaning toward Marxist principles. But the convention itself was not merely an isolated example of opportunism; the history of the Yipsels in the student field is a long sad narrative of confusion. For many years, the League refused to amalgamate the Socialist controlled Student LID with the Communist led NSL because Socialists didn't like Communists and considered them disruptionists. The Yipsels had no general policy in regard to the organization of students; Yipsel conduct in the student field was based on three major considerations: organizational opportunity—without any conception of what to do with the organization after it was formed; a strong belief that a Socialist youth movement should concentrate almost entirely on young workers instead of fooling around with petty bourgeois students; and an inherited and instinctive distrust of Communists. But during last summer, certain Yipsel leaders in the SLID, confronted with a large and sincere—albeit confused—movement for student "unity," laid the plans for the formation of the American Student Union; the YPSL as a whole maintained its former position and still opposed

amalgamation. In September, however, the NEC of the YPSL were suddenly faced with a fait accompli, with the fact that Yipsels were openly violating established policy by working for and supporting amalgamation; therefore, on the basis of a mail vote, they reversed the stand of the YPSL. Yipsels were now instructed that they were to support amalgamation because many unaffiliated students were for it. Organizational opportunity—correctly spelled "opportunism"—was cited as the reason for the change in line. At no time, however, did the spectre of Marxism appear in discussions of student policy. It was tacitly, and perhaps a trifle enthusiastically assumed that the YPSL was a Marxist organization and therefore could not deviate.

A desultory educational campaign was conducted in the Challenge and in the YSR. The Challenge articles in particular, (with the conspicuous and honorable exception of an anonymous letter on the ASU in the December issue) were educational only in the Daily Worker sense of the term; the comrades were simply told that the new line was.

When the National Organizational Committee of the YPSL met in the middle of December, only one draft program for the ASU was submitted to it, and this program was correctly rejected because it called for the cooperative commonwealth. After discussion, it was decided that the YPSL must insist on two points in the program, a general and definite orientation of students toward the working class, and sufficient elaboration of the Oxford oath in order to prevent the Communists or liberals from discovering any loop holes which would permit them to support an imperialist war. The carrying out of this plan and complete control over the caucus were entrusted to a steering committee composed of Al Hamilton, Hal Draper, and myself.

At the convention, opportunism manifested itself in three major ways: in the program which the YPSL advocated for the ASU, in the general manner in which the YPSL conducted itself on the floor of both the ASU and the SLID conventions, and in the organization and control of the YPSL caucus. These will be taken up in order.

The program which the YPSL advocated was, with minor changes, adopted by the convention of the ASU; therefore, it is quite easy for the reader to discover how the program agrees with the requirements set up by the NOC. The most obvious omission concerns the relationship between the students and the labor movement. In a program which deals so thoroughly with the immediate economic problems of the students it is a little surprising to discover only the most casual of references



toward the working class. Toward the end of the program there is an expression of general support of the working class and the farmers; but nowhere is there any attempt to explain the economic reasons for student support of working class struggles. This is probably just as well, considering the economic implication of the section on war which chatters about "the inner oligarchy" which wants war in order to make money and the "plain people" who oppose war because they dislike being killed. Because the section on war in the program was, at its best, completely pacifist, Hal Draper introduced a resolution which contained three specific statements against kinds of war and which was intended to refer to the present situation. The Communists scoffed at the first two sections which declared against support of "defensive" wars and support of "progressive" wars against fascism, as superfluous, but they voted for them. They introduced a substitute for the third section, which opposed support of a war even though the government was allied with a "progressive, non-imperialist nation." (This last phrase means Soviet Russia). Their substitute, obviously intended to provide them with an out in case of Hearst inspired war with Japan, spoke glowingly of the Soviet Union as a force for peace, and was passed by a vote of approximately 190 to 150. The only complete program on war was introduced by the Spartacus Youth League; Joseph Lash, the Socialist in the chair, ruled that it was out of order. It is interesting to note that in Draper's resolution the working class is ignored, but by that time, the working class was becoming used to being ignored by the "unity" minded students.

The major concern of the majority of the Yipsel leaders at the convention was to avoid offending the liberals and the Communists. At no time was it indicated that the YPSL thought the program of the ASU was not a complete exposition of revolutionary theory. Only once, at the end of the convention after the Stalinist motion on Soviet Russia's peace role was passed, did a Yipsel indicate that the League was not in com-

plete accord with the actions of the convention. The delegates may be legitimately surprised when they return to their campuses and discover Yipsels advocating a completely different program for changing society from the one they engineered through the convention. The Yipsels consciously encouraged one of the most dangerous tendencies in the modern radical movement, the idealistically inspired bleating for unity on any terms—preferably the wrong ones. The Yipsels, instead of trying to end the political confusion among the liberal students, catered to it, and ended up in the stupor of opportunism.

Yipsel caucuses were only held because the delegates insisted upon them. Although the delegates had little education about a program for the ASU, no discussion on program was held at the caucuses. Two members of the steering committee who changed names on the slate at their pleasure, were only compelled to reconsider their actions because of the pressure of the rank and file delegates. At the caucus, the Yipsels were told by the SLID officials that they had decided to remain in office for the ASU. When one of the Yipsels objected to the proceedings, the steering committee successfully opposed him for the SLID steering committee with a Stalinist sympathizer whose name was being distributed at the convention signed to the call of the American League Against War and Fascism Youth section Congress.

These are merely the bitter results of confused theory which has its only basis in the desire for bigger and better organizations. It would be profitless to list all the errors into which opportunism in the student field has led the YPSL. There is no room in this article to discuss a correct student program for the League; but after the opportunistic catastrophe at Columbus, it is high time that the YPSL concern itself with the problem of winning students to the revolutionary labor movement instead of contenting itself with hypnotizing the liberals into liberal organizations.

## A UNITED FRONT AGAINST WAR AND FASCISM

By A. Morrison

EVER since the Communists organized the League Against War and Fascism there has been a tendency amongst the more naive left wingers of the Socialist party either to join the communist organization or create a new one where the Socialists will be in control. With the sharp turn to the right which the Communists have made recently and the careful and ingratiating attitude which they have assumed towards the members of the Socialist party, the tendency on the part of some well meaning members of the S. P. to join the present League has been considerably strengthened. There has as yet been no thorough discussion of this problem and it is important enough to deserve discussion in the whole Socialist press.

It must be insisted on first of all that the attitude of the old guard towards anything connected with communism is an attitude which no one with the slightest tendency towards the left can accept. The idea that any organization which permits the Communists as an integral part or which has been initiated by the Communists is by that very fact taboo is too absurd even to attempt to refute. It may be true that in certain cases the question will come up whether allying ourselves with the Communists will alienate a large mass of organized workers and necessarily, in most instances, if that is the case, we must choose to go with the latter. That is altogether different from the principle which the right wing of the party wants to follow, namely, that we must avoid any and every organization in the least tinged with communism.

The left wing Socialists must accept the united front with the Communists in principle with the understanding that its application will depend upon particular circumstances. This means that each local must be given wide discretionary powers to decide whether or not to enter a united front with the Communists.

The question of joining the American League Against War and Fascism can be solved only if we analyze all the factors involved both theoretical and practical. It undoubtedly will be discovered that some of us are in favor of joining the League but for altogether different reasons.

A united front against war is a tremendously appealing idea. What reason can one possibly have in opposing an organization composed of Communists, Socialists, liberals, church people, pacifists etc. etc. who are all determined to fight imperialist war? He must be insane who thinks that the Socialist party alone can prevent war and the consequent necessity of our joining with all others who are opposed to war seems so natural as to be beyond question. Only those who understand and follow the fundamental principles of revolutionary socialism will realize that to depend upon any organization other than the working class led by a revolutionary party to fight war is to follow a policy which is bound to lead to disaster.

War is as intimately bound up with capitalist society as the exploitation of the working class by the capitalist owners of industry. To think of being able to prevent war, in the long run, without at the same time destroying the system which breeds war, is as utopian as the idea of introducing socialism by building socialist colonies. Pacifists and reformists who in practice accept the present order of society and merely wish to ameliorate the unbearable conditions of the working class look to disarmament schemes and the League of Nations to prevent war. Revolutionary socialists look to the revolutionary overthrow of capitalist society to prevent imperialist wars. It follows that revolutionary socialists have only one program to prevent war: the program of social revolution. That means that our fight against war is not something special, something separate and apart from our general revolutionary activities but is intimately connected with those activities.

What does it mean to have a special organization to fight war? It means in the first place to have a special program for fighting war. And since pacifists, liberals and all other non-descripts will be members of that special organization, the program will not be a program of social revolution to prevent war but will necessarily be an incorrect program. It will be a sort of a class 'B' program for the prevention of war. Revolutionary socialists will reject the idea that there is such a thing as a correct program for fighting war outside of the program of the revolutionary party.



Some comrades will point to the fact that we help organize a Labor party even though such a party will not have a correct program for the social revolution. Therein exactly lies the distinction. We do not help organize a Labor party for the social revolution while there can be no other reason for creating an organization to fight war except to fight war, a thing which it will be unable to do. It would be just as incorrect for us to help build a Labor party for the social revolution as to create a League to fight war.

Does that mean that there can be no united front against war under any circumstances? Not at all. Assume that this country is about to declare war. There is no reason whatever why revolutionary Socialists cannot join with Communists, reformists and pacifists for a demonstration against the impending conflict; there is no reason why we could not get together on joint ACTIONS either before or during the war. But we do not create a permanent organization to fight war, with a definite program for that organization. What is the difference? The difference is that we should accept the idea of joint actions against war but not of a joint organization with a program different from our program.

In the last analysis practically the only work of an organization such as the League Against War is the work of PROPAGANDA and there can be no united front on the question of propaganda against war. Every organization against war has its own ideas of how to stop war and we cannot consent to a minimum program for agitation against war. We can only consent to a minimum program of activities against war.

Take the present program of the League Against War and Fascism. The inference is absolutely clear that war can be stopped without a proletarian revolution; that fascism can be conquered without the overthrow of the capitalist system which breeds fascism. No revolutionary socialist can accept such an idea and we cannot lend our name to something which we know is wrong and which must inevitably confuse the masses. In so far as the program of the present League calls for any activities, a joint committee composed of representatives of different organizations is the proper and sufficient method for taking care of such activities.

Let us take a more concrete example, the question of the united front against the invasion of Ethiopia by Italian imperialism. Could revolutionary socialists ever consent to accepting the idea of sanctions by one set of imperialist robbers against the Italian ruling class? Out of the question. Our propaganda and agitation in this particular instance is peculiar to ourselves and we cannot under any circumstances surrender the right to agitate against the attack of Italy from a revolu-

tionary point of view. But that should not in the least prevent us from getting together with the Communists and the other reformists in joint actions to prevent the shipment of arms and oil to Italy. In the one case it is a question of ideas where we can have no united front; in the other it is a question of action where we favor a united front.

As a matter of fact the question of sanctions is so all-important that it is inconceivable for us to have a formal united front against the Italian invasion of Ethiopia with those groups favoring sanctions by the League of Nations. Since, practically speaking, the revolutionary movement is too weak to do anything effective to stop the shipment of munitions and oil to Italy the possibility of a united front is very limited.

Should we not however join the League because it will furnish an opportunity for our members to be active? But it is always a question of what kind of activity? If the activity is in the wrong channels it is best not to be active at all. Of course if the League has many working class elements within its fold it would be correct for us to send in our members or even join for the purpose of winning them over to our program. In the same way as we would join any organization with a working-class tendency for the purpose of winning converts to our ideas. But that must not be confused with the united front. In the first place we must be clear theoretically on the question of the united front against war and then we can decide what to do with reference to joining the League Against War and Fascism from a tactical viewpoint.

It follows from the above that whereas we might in certain instances favor joining the League Against War and Fascism we would under no circumstances favor the idea of building our own League.

With reference to the struggle against fascism the situation is somewhat different because that struggle can assume peculiar forms. If fascism reaches a point of development where working class meetings of all types are attacked by the fascists it would be necessary and correct to create an anti-fascist organization the main and practically the only purpose of which would be to defend all working class meetings against attack. In such an organization workers and others should join regardless of political differences because essentially it would be an organization to do something definite, to defend all working class gatherings against attack. Even though fascism has not as yet developed to a point in this country where fascist gangs are attacking working class meetings there is enough of a danger to justify thinking seriously of creating such an anti-fascist organization. But without any program which would confuse the masses into believing that fascism can be conquered without a real and successful struggle for power.

## TOWARD SOCIALIST CLARITY

ALBERT GOLDMAN

### YIPSELS IN THE AMERICAN STUDENT UNION

**I**MPORTANT problems are involved in the formation of the American Student Union and the role which Yipsels should play in that Union. Georg Mann raises some of those problems in his article on the Student Union convention held at Columbus. They should be discussed thoroughly until both the problems and the possible solutions are clear. It seems to me that several serious mistakes were made at Columbus and they should not be repeated.

1) Accepting the advisability of creating a united organization on the student field, it was wrong for the Yipsels to make the acceptance of any kind of a war program as a condition precedent for amalgamation. There was a strong tendency in that direction although in the end the SLID correctly joined the Student Union in spite of the incomplete program. If unity is justified at all it is to be accomplished primarily on the basis of immediate demands for students and not on the basis of a theoretical program on war.

2) It was wrong for the Yipsels, through the SLID, to advocate a program on war which was incomplete and incorrect. The Yipsels must at all times propose a theoretical program on war which shows the connection of war with the capitalist sys-

tem and clearly states the necessity of the overthrow of that system in order to abolish war. The Student Union might not accept such a program but then it would be clear that the YPSL does not accept the pacifist program of the Student Union. This does not mean that the SLID should refuse to join but should remain as a minority in the Student Union agitating for its program. There can be no class A and class B theoretical program on war. There can be unity in action against war but not in theoretical program on war.

3) No discussion was carried on amongst the Yipsels as to the character of the program which they should stand for at the unity convention. Such a discussion should have been carried on for at least six weeks before the actual convention. Because of this lack of discussion the Yipsel delegates came unprepared to grasp the fundamental issues involved.

4) The approach of the N.E.C. of the Yipsels to the Yipsel caucus at the convention was a purely bureaucratic one. The National Organization Committee appointed a steering committee the duty of which was, to all intents and purposes, to tell the caucus what to do. Had there been a discussion conducted before the convention and a decision arrived at as to main policies the caucus would have known what those policies were and should



have been empowered to carry out those policies without a steering committee appointed by the national organization coming down to dictate to the caucus. Discipline does not mean commanding and blind obedience. This Communist conception of discipline must be fought. Because of the lack of discussion and because of the bureaucratic approach some comrades made the mistake of openly breaking Yipsel discipline. But the blame must be traced to the wrong method of treating the whole problem.

### NO SCHEME CAN BRING PEACE UNDER CAPITALISM

**I**F ONE is interested in peace, without seeing that only the destruction of the capitalist system by the revolutionary action of the working class is the only effective way of assuring peace, he is liable to accept all kinds of utopian ideas that have as their object the prevention of war under the present system. A League of Nations, a Kellogg peace pact, sanctions, neutrality and what not will be advocated as a means to bring peace to a troubled world. A revolutionary Marxist who accepts the position that war is inevitable under the capitalist system and wants to use the desire for peace that exists amongst the masses simply as an aid in the struggle to overthrow the capitalist system rejects all schemes to bring peace to a capitalist world. A revolutionary Socialist does not argue whether this or that particular policy of the capitalist class will ensure peace. And from that follows the necessary policy of a revolutionary party to retain the independence of the working class in any question involving war under the capitalist system.

Comrade Norman Thomas in his anxiety to bring some measure of peace into a warlike world suggests that the Ethiopian war be settled "not at the expense of Ethiopia but on terms of giving Italy better access to trade, especially to raw materials." And he adds "that it is not likely that capitalist nations will make such an adjustment except under pressure" of the working class. This idea he presents in his column in the Socialist Call of Nov. 30, 1935.

A militant pacifist, with logic on his side, can object to such an idea on the ground that at the present time to suggest giving Mussolini access to raw materials would mean to reward a wrong-doer and to set an example to all other imperialist nations that are not satisfied with what they have. He can readily argue that an aggressor should be punished and not rewarded.

But that would be far from the position of a revolutionary Socialist. Such a Socialist would simply say that the working class has nothing to do with the division of the world amongst the imperialist powers, that it is interested in destroying imperialism and not in seeing that the different imperialisms have their "just" share of the spoils.

But are we not interested in peace and should we not do something to prevent a horrible war? That is the argument of all those who do not accept the Marxist position on war. It is the argument of those who favor the League of Nations and those who favor sanctions. It is the argument of those who will not see that to destroy the possibility of war capitalism must be destroyed. All other proposals are utopian and create illusions.

Let us attempt to follow out the logic of the doctrine that the working class must exert pressure on the capitalist governments to give Italy access to raw materials. If it means anything at all it means that Italy must be given colonies that now belong to

### Defense (Continued from page 2)

the leading committees because those committees will actually represent all the currents in the labor movement. When and if rivalries and factionalism will disappear the membership can be given the full power to elect the leading committees.

With the disappearance of the "Third Period" madness of the Communists, the question of program will not be difficult to solve. A legal and mass pressure defense based upon a realistic conception of the class struggle must be the basis. There will of course be differences of opinion but these can be thrashed out after the unified defense organization is created.

The Socialist party has two tasks to perform with reference to defense work. First to build the Labor and Socialist Defense so long as no united defense organization exists. Second to take the initiative in creating a united defense organization.

some other powers. It could not mean that Italy be simply permitted to purchase raw materials from other nations. She has that privilege now. And if it means that colonies at present under the domination of an imperialist country be turned over to Mussolini, then how in the wide world can a Socialist party deal with colonies in the same way as imperialist powers deal with them, that is, treat them as the property of the capitalist countries? A revolutionary Socialist party can do only one thing with reference to colonies. It must demand the right of self determination for them; it must fight for their independence of all imperialisms.

Access to raw materials for all nations without enslaving any backward people is possible only after the destruction of capitalist imperialism.

### STALINISTS TEACH REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALISTS

(From the report of Tom De Fazio at the November Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, U.S.A.)

**I** THINK Comrade Weinstone should tell the Socialists of Detroit to join the Second International and then they will probably find out something about sanctions because the Second International is in perfect agreement with sanctions."

I take it that Tom wants to be sarcastic. Aside from that the attempt of communists to teach the left wing of the Socialist party to be loyal to the Second International is perfectly in order. I mean loyal to the ideas of the reformist leaders of the International. As a matter of fact there is no reason why the Stalinists should not join the Second International and teach loyalty inside of that International. Between them and the reformist leaders there is so little difference that they would find little difficulty in making a bloc against the revolutionary anti-sanctionists.

But if the Stalinists move in will the revolutionary Marxists have to move out? At present, at least, we have freedom to express our opinions, an idea which the Stalinists are no longer capable of tolerating.

### AND THIS IS GOING TO DEFEND US AGAINST FASCISM

"Ministers, rabbis, a member of the Canadian Parliament, two war-bitten generals—one American, the other Chinese—musicians, actors, and World War Veterans, all are taking part in the Third U.S. Congress Against War and Fascism, which opens on Friday etc. etc. . . ." (Special to the Daily Worker Jan. 2, 1936) And the fascists are undoubtedly shivering in their boots when they read about such a conglomeration of "valiant fighters." But the Communists are great at creating noise, sound and fury.

The only justification for the Socialist party to enter the League would be the desire to put our program before people who know nothing about it. But the question remains: Are there any people in the League which would justify the least bit of time and energy necessary to expend in working in the League?

### LEFT WINGERS MUST BE INVITED TO JOIN PARTY

**N**OW that the old guard is about to make its exit from the Socialist party there is no room in this country for revolutionary individuals or groups outside of the S. P. The only excuse such individuals or groups can possibly have for remaining isolated from the main stream of revolutionary activity is that the old guard would refuse to permit them to join the party. Soon there will no longer be that excuse. The realistic revolutionists, not in any way influenced by any desire to join the Stalinists, must come into the party. This applies especially to the Workers' party.

The N.E.C. of our party should extend an invitation to all revolutionists and revolutionary groups, who are anxious to build a revolutionary party and who will abide by discipline, to join the Socialist party.

### SOCIALIST APPEAL

Chicago Editorial Committee

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Chicago, Ill.

Subscription rates: one dollar, 12 issues—50 cents 6 issues